PEAKS OF SHALA

000 We were awakened in the damp chill of a watery gray dawn, and with surprise found ourselves on its unfamiliar softness, in the bleak room of unpainted boards. Padre Marjan was knocking at the door. In a moment he entered, barefooted, in his long brown robe girded with cord, and, going to the incongruous office desk, he carefully unlocked a lower drawer and took out a box of soap. There were twenty small cakes of soap in the box. He took out one, carefully, put the box back in the drawer, locked it.

87l 86l He had been followed by a small boy, a very serious child, and visibly nervous. About eleven years old, he wore the long, tight, black-braided white trousers, colored sash, and woolly, fringed short black jacket of his people, but they were all soaking wet and very old, mended and mended again until hardly any of the original fabric was left. His bare feet were blue with cold, and so were his bare arms, for the Scanderbeg jacket has no sleeves, and he did not wear a shirt. He stood very straight, and swallowed hard, keeping his face impassive.

Padre Marjan turned to him, holding the cake of soap. He spoke earnestly and at some little length. He then presented the cake of soap to the child, who bent a knee to receive it, and kissed the padre's hand and then the soap. An impressive little ceremonial, which we witnessed, wide eyed, from the mattress where we sat huddled among the blankets. Rain was still sluicing

[Padre Marjan of Thethis -- [134] Analyst]

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against the windows, so that the water on them was surely as thick as the glass.

We looked inquiringly at Frances, who understood Albanian. Her eyes shone, she was so excited. "It's a school prize!" she said, and, listening, "He's the best scholar in school; already he can read and write. Isn't it splendid!" The boy saluted us gravely; one saw that he had just gone through a profound emotional experience. "Long may you live!" said he, and went out.

Padre Marjan said that the school had been opened ten days before. On the first day there were forty-three pupils, on the second day sixty-two, on the third day ninety-seven. All the tribe was sending its children to live with relatives in Thethis and go to school. No more than ninety-seven could get into the padre's living room; the others must wait until, with the money Alex and Frances had collected, the schoolhouse could be built. There were no benches or desks, of course; the children stood packed tightly in the cold room, and he taught them by writing with a piece of chalk on the walls. Already this boy could read and write words of one syllable and merited a cake of soap. Padre Marjan, at his own expense, had sent two hundred miles to Tirana for fifty cakes of soap, to be used as prizes. There was, of course, no other soap in the tribe; a more magnificent gift could not have been imagined.

The boy who got the cake of soap walked